

# Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Bleakley, Paul ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2512-4072> (2021) The cult of corruption: reframing organizational frameworks of police corruption from a cultic perspective. *Deviant Behavior*, 42 (5) . pp. 565-577. ISSN 0163-9625 [Article] (doi:10.1080/01639625.2020.1741775)

Final accepted version (with author's formatting)

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/29558/>

## Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

[eprints@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@mdx.ac.uk)

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

## Abstract

Corruption in policing is a criminological phenomenon that is regularly misconstrued – whether as a case of independently-operating “rotten apples” or as a passive symptom of anomic organizational culture. This article seeks to reframe organized police corruption as an active process of seductive-recruitment, wherein corrupt officers utilized the same strategies as a conventional cult to both recruit and retain members. Using the example from Australia of the Queensland Police Force in the era before the Fitzgerald Inquiry as its primary case study, this article draws on a range of cult studies theories to develop an innovative framework for understanding the process by which an officer is lured into organized corruption. It discusses the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for this in-group affiliation, with reference to matters of role and identity that derive from involvement with the “blue brotherhood” of policing. In casting organized police corruption as a form of secular cult, it provides an opportunity to better understand the tactics used to entrap new members into corrupt networks, as well as to consider the factors that make them vulnerable to recruitment in the first place.

Key words: police; corruption; cult; organizational criminology; Queensland.

## Introduction

From an organizational culture perspective, the potential for corruption is one of the most serious issues faced in law enforcement. More than a simple case of routine professional misconduct, institutional corruption fundamentally undermines the compact that gives police the consent and authority to operate in the community (Lenz and Chaires 2007). In certain situations, in which police corruption reaches an endemic level, public trust in the criminal

justice system can be critically damaged to the point where a complete reframing of the relationship between officer and citizen (Hough et al. 2010). As such, it prevails on criminal justice professionals to develop a greater understanding of the institutional factors that contribute to the formation of pervasive police corruption, in the hopes that doing so will allow for early identification and intervention. To this point, contemporary perspectives on police corruption have begun to reject the traditionalist concept of the “rotten apple” – an officer with an intrinsic pull towards corruption who operates independently and, in doing so, tarnishes the reputation of the police force as an organization (Bryett and Harrison 1993). Most recent scholarly evaluations of police corruption take a more positivist approach by exploring the structural factors that contribute to the spread of corruption. In this article, these intra-organizational factors will be considered in a way that reframes police corruption as a form of cult-like group formation. While most modern analyses of police corruption examine it as a response to anomic organizational conditions, this article contends that corruption is spread intentionally in a way that bears significant comparisons to that in which cults are formed. In doing so, a case is made for reassessing existing understandings of the motivations of corrupt police officers, as well as advocating for the cultivation of a greater understanding of the pressures placed on those officers who enter a pre-existing network of corruption.

In order to effectively prosecute the argument for reconceptualizing police corruption as cult-like behavior, this article will focus on what is arguably Australia’s most preeminent historically important case study of criminal justice misconduct: the Queensland Police Force (QPF). From at least the 1950s to the late 1980s, the QPF was controlled by a cabal of corrupt officers who presided over an extensive vice-related protection racket; those involved in this stand over racket ranged from uniformed junior officers to several Police Commissioners (Herbert 1988). Ultimately, this corruption was exposed by the Fitzgerald Inquiry (1987-89)

and resulted in the prosecution of several senior officers, including Police Commissioner Terrence Lewis, as well as a broad-ranging restructuring of the organization itself. The Fitzgerald Inquiry did more than just identify which officers were involved in misconduct: it revealed the inner-workings of a corrupt system that prevailed in the QPF for decades, as well as exposing the ways in which senior officers in the network sought to extend the system of corruption by recruiting junior police into what was referred to colloquially as “the Joke” (Herbert 1988; Fitzgerald 1989). The Fitzgerald Inquiry gathered primary evidence of misconduct from an array of police (honest and corrupt), politicians and criminal operators. Using this evidence as a foundation, this article examines the QPF as a case study of cult-like recruitment to police corruption, as well assessing the parallel between the actions of traditional cults and the manner in which corrupt QPF officers used coercive tactics to ensure continued loyalty to their illicit network.

## Methodology

Before making an assessment as to whether police corruption can be classified as a cult-like social formation, it is first essential to develop a clear set of criteria to determine the factors that define a group as a “cult”. This presents a clear methodological issue for this article, as most cult-oriented literature to this point has focused on the spiritual or religious characteristics that usually form a cult’s driving philosophy. In religious scholar Allan W. Eister’s outline of a structural theory of cults, he acknowledges that the religious aspects of a cult’s identity are conversely incidental and instrumental to their formation: Eister proposes that it is “culture crises [that] promote the growth of cult movements ... characterized by dislocations in the communicational and orientational institutions of society ... that normally create and standardize symbols” (1972: 319). Eister argues that non-traditional religious belief systems

are a manifestation of a state of anomie, in which participants experience a fundamental disconnect with generally accepted societal norms and values. These mainstream norms and values are replaced with those of the cult, with the collective assuming the role of primary social influence over adherents. It is the contention of this article, however, that non-traditional religion is not the only form in which cults can manifest. While the article draws on a variety of criterion developed over the past four decades to categorise the cult-like behaviors it discusses, its argument is largely anchored in Fournier and Monroy's concept of *narcissistic seduction* (1999). An analysis of recruitment and retention practices in conventional religious cults, Fournier and Monroy's work is highly relevant to the case study discussed in this article. When supplemented by additional theoretical material on the practices of cults, it forms the basis of a typology of cults that can be applied in a policing context.

Much of the reference material used in this article to outline the corruption that existed in the QPF has been sourced from files in the Queensland State Archives related to the Fitzgerald Inquiry: while many sensitive files connected to this inquiry remain sealed for privacy reasons, a considerable amount of the witness testimony and legal exhibits presented to Fitzgerald are available for public access. Additionally, government documents in Queensland are ordinarily subject to a standard thirty-year non-access period before being released to the public. As this article explores corruption in a pre-Fitzgerald QPF – in other words, prior to 1987 – this non-access period has passed, and access has been granted to a wider range of archival materials ranging from cabinet records to official correspondence. This study draws primarily on testimony provided to the Fitzgerald Inquiry between 1987 and 1989. Evidence primarily takes the form of transcripts of testimony given before the commission, as well as prepared statutory declarations submitted in lieu of testimony. Some of this evidence, like the sworn declaration of Colin Maxwell Dillon (1988), comes from “honest” police and relates to the general

subcultural conditions facilitating corruption in the QPF. Other material, such as the testimony of Jack Herbert (1988), comes from admittedly corrupt officers who provided details of the Joke after being offered indemnity from prosecution.

Even with access to this wide array of materials, the usual challenges of documentary analysis persist wherein archival materials often “do not simply reflect, but also construct social reality and versions of events” (May 1997: 164). For this reason, a variety of primary and secondary sources related to corruption in the QPF were accessed to provide context; these sources include autobiographical works by former QPF officers with intimate knowledge of corruption like Domenico Cacciola, official reports published by judicial inquiries into police corruption such as Queensland’s Fitzgerald Inquiry (1989) and New South Wales’s Wood Royal Commission (1997), and relevant non-fiction publications focused on the period. Some of these non-fiction publications, like the work of Chamberlain, Keast and Lauchs (2012) or Brereton and Ede (1996), take the form of traditional academic research on corruption’s impact on policing in Queensland, as well as law enforcement more generally. These materials provide a conceptual framework using which it is possible to better understand the organizational factors influencing corrupt networks in the QPF. Other secondary source material is more akin to long-form journalism, intended to provide a longitudinal perspective on the development of corruption over a period of time. The series of books published by journalist Matthew Condon – which includes *Three Crooked Kings* (2013), *Jacks and Jokers* (2014) and *All Fall Down* (2015) – charts the history of policing in Queensland during the era that is covered by this study. Supported by archival research and interviews with a diverse range of participants in the events covered in the books, Condon’s series has been recognized with an award by the Queensland government as a work of state significance for its contributions to historical understanding.

There is considerable utility in adopting a historical criminology approach to support the contention that a cultic recruitment model exists in police corruption. By its very nature, corruption is a clandestine practice that is difficult to identify and analyze in a contemporary setting. The case of the QPF in the pre-Fitzgerald era offers an opportunity to examine a corrupt network of police that has already been publicly exposed in a formal judicial inquiry. Making an offer of unqualified immunity to officers in return for their testimony on corruption meant that the Fitzgerald Inquiry was able to examine clandestine networks in greater detail than otherwise would have been possible – a major asset to this study, as it helps to illuminate aspects of the recruitment and retention process that have otherwise eluded researchers in this field. The purpose of historical criminology is essentially to cultivate a better appreciation of past patterns and trends in crime, with the goal of applying the lessons of the past in a contemporary context. The vast breadth of documentary materials produced by the Fitzgerald Inquiry and held in the Queensland State Archives allows for a thorough re-examination of police corruption in a system where it reached an endemic level. It provides as full a picture of a clandestine network of corruption that is available, and thereby serves as a perfect case study through which to explore the issue of cultic recruitment in this context.

The primary source material that informs this article was the product of periods of archival research conducted at two locations: the Queensland State Archives at Runcorn, and the Queensland State Library in South Brisbane. Each of these venues holds an extensive range of documents related not just to the Fitzgerald Inquiry but, importantly, to policing administration in the era before this epochal event. As noted, there were some limitations of the availability of data as a result of restricted access periods placed on certain sensitive documents. For those

documents that were not specifically subject to extended restriction, the standard release period is thirty years. Data collection occurred between 2017 and 2019 — exactly thirty years after the Fitzgerald Inquiry’s 1987 to 1989 proceedings (Fitzgerald 1989; Condon 2015). Because of this, a diversity of new material was available to access that had not been obtainable prior to this study, including (but not limited to) inquiry transcripts, sworn witness statements and correspondence between the QPF and state government. As an initial step, all available documents held in the Fitzgerald Inquiry’s archives were accessed. All relevant files were then scanned, catalogued and annotated after close reading. Once the inquiry’s files were analyzed in this way, new leads emerged that directed further archival research. If an officer’s name recurred in the testimony offered to Fitzgerald, for example, personnel and case files relevant to that person were accessed from the archives to determine if there was any further information that could provide insight into the networks of corruption at play in the QPF. In many ways, this secondary stage of research was exploratory and, often, did not bear verifiable results due to restricted access periods and, particularly, incomplete files that did not include all the detail needed for a complete evaluation. Based on May’s (1997) critique of documentary analysis, concerns around the biases of those who originally created the archival material also had to be considered. Part of the article’s central thesis is that corruption was endemic in Queensland, and so it follows that much of the material accessed was created by individuals with a vested interest in concealing misconduct. Bias was accounted for by contextualizing primary source material with secondary sources like Condon’s series. Broader understanding of the networks of corruption at work in the QPF provided an opportunity to assess the likely motivations of the author of each document, which was included in the annotations of each document during the primary collection phase. Where possible, Fitzgerald Inquiry documents were used based on the view that authors of these materials were less likely to be involved in corruption, having been closely vetted by Fitzgerald ahead of becoming involved in the anticorruption operation.



The statements of officers provided with indemnity from prosecution were also treated as (on balance) more accurate than those of officers who did not take an indemnity deal, given the potential risk of prosecution influencing the probability of honesty in the latter group.

## Foundational Literature

A diversity of research has been conducted on the factors that make an individual vulnerable to recruitment into deviant subcultural groups. Durkheim's concept of anomie is central to this process of recruitment and retention into such groups — both by priming individuals for involvement and, once they are a part of the group, facilitating a deregulation of their existing values and belief systems to be supplanted by those promoted by the cult (Stark and Bainbridge 1980). Robert K. Merton's seminal interpretation of anomie is highly relevant to this process, particularly when it comes to corrupt policing networks. Mertonian anomie is closely linked to strain and the concept that deviance occurs when individuals find that they are unable to achieve their goals through legitimate means (Merton 1957). Such a realization drives the affected person to engage in deviant behavior to achieve their goals through *illegitimate* means instead, ultimately experiencing a fundamental reshaping of normative values. This is particularly true in groups where there is a shared strain or frustration with the inability to achieve goals through conventional pathways. Groups with a shared frustration like this can, under the right conditions, develop an anomic culture of norms that are out of alignment with wider society. The validation of other group members only serves to strengthen these norms, securing the anomic group's internal cohesion and supporting further deviant behavior.

As noted, there are considerable theoretical challenges involved in attempting to establish a religion-free criterion of cult-like social formations. Scholarly interest in the subject has

primarily focused on religion as a key motivator for recruitment into a cult. Bruce Campbell (1978) distinguished between three subtypes of cults, each of which were in some way driven by religious or spiritual factors: an *illumination* type that is grounded in the mystical, an *instrumental* type wherein “inner experience is sought for its effects”, and a *service-oriented* type wherein the individual was focused on providing aid to others (228). Despite Campbell’s clear focus on the spiritual drivers of cult affiliation, it should be observed that only one subtype – illumination – was predicated on an overtly-religious system. Both the instrumental and service-oriented subtypes may have been associated with religious philosophy in practice, but at their core are fundamentally individualistic motivations related more to the cult members desire to improve themselves or the world around them. Like earlier scholars in the field, Eileen Barker (2010) inextricably links cults to what she describes as “new religious movements” (NRMs), and makes the argument that a large part of the social construction of these NRMs as a social problem derives from the antagonistic relationship they establish with the world around them. Barker notes that “it is not uncommon for the movements to operate with a dichotomous world-view, erecting a sharp boundary between ‘us’ (the insiders) and ‘them’ (the outsiders)” which, in turn, encourages members to isolate themselves from wider society and perceive non-members as some form of alien “other” (2010: 201-202). While both Campbell and Barker focus their attention on religiously-oriented cults, the characteristics that they identify can clearly be applied to the cult-like social formations in corrupt policing networks: at the core of their argument is a recognition of the role of individualistic motivations in driving cult recruitment, as well as the practice of self-segregation that occurs when the values of an in-group (corrupt officers) are in mismatch with those held by the out-group (the public).

While this article is concerned with cult-like behaviors in police corruption, it is mostly interested in the process of recruitment and retention that occurs in corrupt networks. For this

reason, Anne Fournier and Michel Monroy's (1999) theories on narcissistic seduction in cults is of high significance. Described as the first step in cult commitment, the practical application of narcissistic seduction techniques can be readily observed in the recruitment of corrupt officers in the QPF. Narcissistic seduction occurs when a seducer-recruiter, in this case an already-corrupt officer, uses methods of psychological manipulation to target non-corrupt officers for inclusion in an existing network. There are several factors that the seducer-recruiter must consider in this process: this may include the vulnerability of the target, existing group dynamics, emotional pressures, out-group attachments and, ultimately, the cult's ability to assist the target in achieving their objectives (Fournier and Monroy 1999). Resulting from this process of seduction, the target's personal happiness becomes inextricably tied to their involvement in the cult in a cycle of dependence in which the absence of the cult, and the benefits that it provides, has an intrinsic negative impact on the now-indoctrinated member of the in-group (Duretete et al. 2008). While this is no doubt a practical reflection of how religiously oriented cults attract members, the process of narcissistic seduction outlined by Fournier and Monroy can be applied beyond the scope of traditional cults. In this case, religion is incidental to the recruitment of members to the in-group, and merely serves as an organizing philosophy around which the cult is formed. By this logic, any in-group with a clearly defined structure and ideology may use the same processes of seductive-recruitment, and operate under the same organizational principles traditionally associated with cults.

In general terms, the cult-like social formation that exists within police forces globally has already been given a name: the blue brotherhood. A term routinely associated with the anomic social conditions found in policing, the blue brotherhood refers to the propensity of police officers to support each other unconditionally, and to turn a blind-eye to misconduct out of a

sense of professional loyalty (Kleinig 2001; Raab and Milward 2003; Lauchs et al. 2012; Merrington 2017). While this sense of camaraderie can form in any organization, Jerome Skolnick argues that the bonds formed between police officers are often more familial than professional, arising from a context in which they were “obliged to back up each other, protect each other, and follow each other into situations of grave danger” (2008: 38). Shannon Merrington asserts that these familial bonds of loyalty are “so strong that officers are willing to lie or commit perjury to protect the conduct of fellow officers” in a sub-practice common in the brotherhood known as the ‘code of silence’ (2017: 21). An expectation exists within the blue brotherhood that members put the interests of the in-group above all others, in a clear reflection of cult-like social conditioning. This commitment to the interests of the collective over that of the individual has been identified as a central cause of pervasive corruption in policing. James Wood (1997) found in his investigation of police corruption in New South Wales that officers who went against “the code” and reported the corruption of their colleagues in the blue brotherhood were often marginalized within the police force; more than social ostracism, this rejection by the brotherhood often had a tangible impact on officers’ careers — particularly when corrupt members of the brotherhood were in positions of ultimate authority, as was the case in the QPF.

A range of literature exists that specifically examines the practice of corruption in the QPF in the pre-Fitzgerald era, mostly due to the high degree of prominence and impact that the commission had on the understanding of how police misconduct was practiced in Australia. Marni Manning asserts that the Fitzgerald Inquiry made Queensland the perfect case study of police corruption, and revealed “three broad and inconvenient truths”: that the profession of policing itself was inherently insular, exhibited an ineffectual internal environment and

operated within a deficient external environment (2014: 137). In short, Manning suggests that many of the issues raised by the Fitzgerald Inquiry derived from the lack of internal and external regulation over the conduct of officers. David Brereton and Andrew Ede support Manning's position, arguing that the lack of controls in the QPF contributed to corruption, and that the fact that senior police were involved in corruption "and were prepared to use their positions of power to deal harshly with dissenters ... [meant that] this elite was able to exploit, to its own advantage, the natural attractions of the code [of silence]" (1996: 108-109). As in Fournier and Monroy's (1999) discussion of cults, Brereton and Ede indicate that the indoctrination into the in-group of the blue brotherhood was a key strategy in the protection of corrupt networks in the QPF. Chamberlain, Keast and Lauchs directly addressed the existence of the blue brotherhood in Queensland policing, describing the QPF as a social network in which "peer pressure, social approval and sanction (stigma) ... bind individuals to a collective unit" (2012: 196). With that considered, it could be argued that internal regulation did exist in the QPF; rather than a formal control mechanism, however, this internal regulation was informally managed by the blue brotherhood.

## **The Cultic Recruitment Model of Corruption in Practice**

### ***The Offer: Seductive-recruitment into Corruption in the QPF***

Membership in the blue brotherhood is a persuasive motivator for officers to participate in corruption, whether it be actively by engaging in misconduct or passively by ignoring the corrupt activities of their colleagues (Merrington 2017; Skolnick 2008). Nevertheless, before being inducted into an existing network of corruption, a targeted officer is often tested to ensure that their commitment to the blue brotherhood is strong enough to withstand a formal offer to participate in organized corruption. The selection of targeted officers is an important step for

members of a corrupt network: should an offer be extended to an officer who is not willing to engage in corruption, the corrupt recruiter runs the risk of exposing their network and leaving both themselves and their co-conspirators vulnerable to punitive disciplinary action (Prenzler and Ronken 2001). For this reason, seductive-recruitment into a web of corruption takes a similar approach to that of a cult, targeting individuals with some form of intrinsic or extrinsic vulnerability that can be manipulated in such a way that they can be convinced to suspend their existing values in order to adopt those of the in-group (Fournier and Monroy 1999). As Eister's structural theory on cults (1972) acknowledges, deviant cult-like social formations occur when "cultural crises" happen that dislocate an individual from the orientational factors that mainstream society is constructed around. Without such a dislocation, it is a considerable challenge for seducer-recruiters to convince a target to join a deviant subgroup, whether that be a cult or a network of corrupt police. Though it is possible to intentionally precipitate such a dislocative cultural crisis, it is often easier for the seducer-recruiter to identify a target that is already either in the process of crisis, or vulnerable to one.

While the social role that they assume is typically seen as that of the strict authoritarian, police officers are typically subject to a greater range of potential vulnerabilities than the average person. In mercenary corruption – wherein officers are offered a bribe for permitting illegal activity to take place – the most common vulnerability may be financial difficulty, but this is not the only factor that motivates police to engage in corruption. In many cases, officers who face personal issues such as sexual impropriety or substance abuse problems, or have previously participated in lower-level corruption are also vulnerable to recruitment into a corrupt network (Punch 2009). In describing the risk factors for corruption in policing, Tim Newburn cautions against the stationing of "vulnerable people ... in situations where the opportunities are particularly tempting to them" (1999: 46). Newburn describes this position

as “the invitational edge”: an often-ephemeral place in which an individual is open to corruption based on a range of variables influencing them to commit deviant acts. Although it found corrupt practices in virtually every part of the QPF, the Fitzgerald Inquiry was able to pinpoint certain areas of policing that were closer to the invitational edge than others — in particular, the Licensing Branch and the Consorting Squad (Lucas 1977; Dickie 1988). Fitzgerald identified these units as the ones in which police were regularly in direct contact with criminal offenders and, as such, where the greatest potential for corruption existed. Corruption in the Licensing Branch ultimately became a key focus for the Fitzgerald Inquiry, which found that a corrupt network of protection referred to as the Joke had existed in some form or another in this unit from at least the late 1950s (Herbert 1988). Given that officers in the Licensing Branch were responsible for the policing of vice activity from illegal gambling to prostitution, ample opportunity existed for corrupt officers to sanction criminal behaviors in return for financial compensation.

Extrinsic motivations like the opportunity to financially benefit from their position meant that corruption in these areas of the QPF was pervasive, as corrupt Licensing Branch officer Jack Herbert testified to at the Fitzgerald Inquiry (Herbert 1988; Dickie 1988; Fitzgerald 1989). In transcripts of testimony, Herbert tells Fitzgerald that during the period in which he managed the Joke he approached most officers that were attached to the branch and “every single officer ... approached to join in the joke [sic] did so quite willingly” (Fitzgerald 1989: 33). It is noteworthy that in this testimony Herbert clarifies that he did not approach every officer that came into the branch, and instead used an informal vetting process to identify those who were most susceptible to a corrupt overture. Herbert’s recruitment of Detective Tony Murphy into the Joke in 1966 provides insight into the factors he considered when recruiting a new officer into the corrupt network. Herbert claims that Murphy’s reputation for corruption while serving

in the Consorting Squad had preceded him, and despite the two men not knowing each other well, Herbert felt that this rumored history of misconduct was reason enough to believe Murphy would be interested in being recruited into the Joke (Fitzgerald 1989). Herbert was correct: not only did Murphy agree to join the protection racket, he suggested the further recruitment of other officers like future commissioner Terry Lewis, who he felt could use their political connections to further the reach of the network (Condon 2013). Again, as in a traditional cult, recruitment to the Joke often occurred as part of a chain: as one officer was successfully integrated into the system, they were able to recruit other colleagues who they felt could be persuaded to participate in corruption. In this case, the seductive-recruiter draws on several of Fournier and Monroy's (1999) criteria for targeting individuals to join a cult. Aside from considering the individual vulnerabilities of the recruited officer – often financial pressures – the seductive-recruiter also depends on existing group dynamics and the connections between officers (both professional and personal) to build a more extensive corrupt network.

As theorists like Eister (1972) and Campbell (1978) suggest, however, extrinsic motivations are only one factor that contributes to a target's susceptibility to be recruited into a cult. Campbell's typology clearly delineates between individuals who join a cult in the hopes of achieving personal benefit, and others who are motivated by more intrinsic or ideological factors. The same is true of policing, where an officer's initial foray into misconduct is often driven by a frustration with the inefficacy of the legal process rather than an outright desire to misuse their authority for personal gain (Punch 2009). Referred to by Wood (1997) as "process corruption" this behavior often occurs in situations where police genuinely believe that the best way to achieve justice is by manipulating the system, or otherwise acting outside of the established procedural rules. While his final report focused primarily on the organized network of mercenary corruption in the Licensing Branch, Fitzgerald nevertheless described the "refusal



of police to ... allow the criminal justice system to operate as intended” was far more pervasive than stereotypical police bribery (1989: 206). Process corruption in the QPF manifested in a range of different ways, from the planting of evidence on suspects to secure a conviction to the common practice of fabricating a false confession (Prenzler 2009). These actions were not typically driven by the desire for extrinsic benefit, and yet they nonetheless contributed to drawing officers into the cult of corruption that existed within the QPF. In a sense, recruitment into corruption by this avenue was the result of a sense of professional strain: as police found their efforts to apply justice stymied by procedure, their acceptance of the structural conditions in which they were expected to operate shifted to the point that a condition of anomie developed in the QPF (Punch 2009). In this anomic state, corruption was not only tolerated, but in many cases encouraged as a legitimate tool to ensure that justice prevailed.

In some cases, the willingness to participate in process corruption for no financial gain was a reason to consider officers for inclusion in a corrupt network. Indeed, in the case of Herbert’s recruitment of Murphy, it was the latter’s reputation for process corruption that preceded him more so than the explicit knowledge that he had willingly received bribes in the past (Fitzgerald 1989). In other cases, however, tolerance of process corruption was so ingrained in the culture of the QPF’s blue brotherhood that even those who were opposed to rackets like the Joke were prone to use it for their own ends. In the mid-to-late 1970s, Licensing Branch Inspector Arthur Pitts and his successor, Alec Jeppesen, were both dedicated to eradicating corruption and shutting down the Joke (Dickie 1988). Even so, both Pitts and Jeppesen were revealed to have conspired to commit perjury and act outside of their jurisdiction in a case against protected illegal bookmakers Stanley Saunders and Brian Sieber in November 1974. The report of the Lucas Inquiry recounts that Pitts and his team had followed Saunders and Sieber into a neighboring state before raiding their vehicle, but were later clandestinely recorded agreeing

to perjure themselves by claiming that the raid occurred in a different location that was within the QPF's jurisdiction (Lucas 1977). Lucas determined that this corruption was the result of a culture that "guaranteed not only discretion [from police], but ready assistance in perjury if this should be required" (Lucas 1977: 28). Pitts, Jeppesen and their co-conspirators had not been recruited into a specific corrupt network like the Joke, and yet the cultural crisis in the QPF that gave rise to this corruption also undoubtedly influenced their own illegal actions. It is within this context where corruption was treated as generally permissible that the seductive-recruiters of the QPF operated. With even purportedly "honest" officers implicated in corrupt practices, the barrier preventing other officers from engaging in other forms of misconduct was lowered and they were effectively primed for recruitment into a cult of corruption (Eister 1972; Brereton and Ede 1996).

### *The Trap: Intrinsic Motivators for Officers Recruited into Corruption*

As Eister (1972) notes, cultural crises are an important aspect of cult formation: absent the existence of an anomic state of moral deregulation, there is less opportunity for a cult to reshape an individual's worldview. Importantly when it comes to strategies for member retention, it is also this anomic deregulation that primes cult members to participate in activities that they would not do under ordinary circumstances. Non-conformist group behaviors were a key element of Merton's concept of how strain influences anomie: in his view, when a group experiences a shared set of structural pressures there is a higher likelihood of that group exhibiting a shared set of deviant behaviors. Merton describes several modes of adaptation to anomic strain, beginning with total conformity to cultural goals and the conventional means of achieving them — essentially, social normativity (Merton 1957). From this launch pad, Merton discusses various combination where individuals under strain reject or accept cultural goals and institutional means. For members of traditional spiritually oriented cults, for example, a

rejection of both cultural goals and institutional means can result in retreatism from society entirely. For a police officer whose attempt to do their job is frustrated by regulations and professional ethics, the cultural goals are accepted while the institutional means are not. Merton (1957) calls this response *innovation*, where an individual under strain develops new and often illegitimate means of achieving proscribed goals.

A recruited member's willingness to suspend personal reservations and put their full trust in the cult is the result of a slow process of indoctrination, during which time they are incrementally separated from their external support system as it is replaced by that of one supplied by the in-group, the cult (Fournier and Monroy 1999). It is at this stage, wherein the recruit has been fully isolated from their pre-existing networks and segregated from dissenting opinions, that full incorporation in the cult occurs (Durete et al. 2008). Segregation of an exclusive in-group is a fundamental aspect of cult formation, just as it was in the corrupt networks of the QPF. Just as cult members operate in a way that is oppositional to mainstream culture, identity in the QPF was typically delineated between honest police officers and those that were "in on the Joke" (participated in corruption). While all officers could claim to be part of the macro-culture that constituted the blue brotherhood, it was only those that were prepared to engage in corruption or turn a blind-eye to the misconduct of their colleagues that were truly considered to be committed to the fraternity of the QPF (Lucas 1977). By its very nature, corruption is practiced in a clandestine way: even if not kept secret from other officers in the brotherhood, it is concealed from the public to avoid criticism and professional sanctions (Punch 2009).

Secrecy has a significant role to play in segregating an in-group, and fostering an anomic condition within it. By forcing members to keep their participation in an in-group secret from “outsiders”, it is inevitable that an individual will turn to their fellow members for support and counsel (Sponholz 2005). In a cult, this makes the recruit increasingly more dependent on other members for support, rather than being exposed to alternative opinions from outside the in-group. The same occurred in the corrupt networks of the QPF where, rather than seeking the advice of non-corrupt colleagues, officers were put in a position where they could only admit their involvement to others involved in the same networks; as a result, they engaged in a feedback loop wherein corrupt officers justified and normalized misconduct to each other (Ashforth and Vikas 2003). As it does in cults, secrecy and segregation fostered an anomic state in the corrupt networks of the QPF, and prevented officers recruited into corruption from being able to acknowledge that their behaviors went against the professional norms and societal expectations of their role.

The risk of being excommunicated from a corrupt in-group is a persuasive reason for officers to continue participating in misconduct. As Durete et al. (2008) note in their discussion of cults, isolating a corrupt officer from other officers not engaged in corruption makes them increasingly dependent on the corrupt network for support and fellowship. This is particularly important in organizations like the QPF, in which corruption was pervasive across all levels of the police hierarchy (Fitzgerald 1989). With so many officers either actively involved in misconduct, or at least passively tolerating it, exposing members of the blue brotherhood as corrupt meant an officer risked disfellowship not just from the in-group of corruption but from the brotherhood of policing itself (Brereton and Ede 1996). Disfellowship is powerful disincentive for action against any cult. An important phase of the seductive-recruitment process involves the manipulation of an officer’s emotional responses to the point that their

personal happiness and sense of identity derives from being a member of the in-group (Fournier and Monroy 1999). If this status quo changes, an officer is likely to suffer from an identity crisis as they attempt to renegotiate their self-conception. In police forces where corruption is limited, there is a potential for corruption whistle-blowers to resume the master role of police officer even after leaving the corrupt in-group. In the QPF this was more challenging because corruption was pervasive to the extent that a rejection of corruption was virtually synonymous with rejecting membership of the blue brotherhood entirely. The central role of the blue brotherhood to an officer's identity made the decision to take this step challenging for officers, and dissuaded many from speaking out against corruption for fear of losing the sense of identity that they had developed as members of the policing fraternity.

### ***The Stick: Blackmail, Threats and Extrinsic Motivations for Corrupt Affiliation***

Anomic conditioning allows cults to retain members by normalizing their behaviors, at least within the in-group that they are now a part of. In cases where this intrinsic motivation is not enough, however, cults often have cause to use extrinsic measures to coerce members into remaining a part of the in-group. Kulik and Alarcon describe fear and guilt as “the glue of communities in manipulative organizations ... in cults the binding emotion is more akin to terror, based on violence, coercion, blackmail, threats, and complete dependence” (2012: 30). In many cults, the collection of coercive material in a cult occurs under the guise of personal growth and self-improvement facilitated by the in-group. Cult-like groups like NXIVM and the Church of Scientology insist on members providing them with compromising personal information by claiming that this assists the in-group in helping a member achieve their objectives. In Scientology, the practice of auditing is portrayed as a way for members to “clear” themselves of psychological burden by being counselled by more senior Scientologists; in reality, auditing has been described as a chance for the in-group to gather blackmail material

that could be used to coerce an individual into remaining with the group should they ever wish to leave (Cusack 2016). Similarly, NXIVM – a purported self-improvement group that has been alternatively described as a sex cult – overtly collected “collateral” from its members in a variety of forms ranging from personal possessions to explicit images. NXIVM used this collateral to ensure that members adhered to their personal goals: if a member agreed to lose weight for example, and failed in this objective, their NXIVM superior could take possession of, or otherwise use, the collateral that they provided (Grigoriadis 2018). Using material supplied by cult members for self-help purposes in a coercive manner is a common tactic of membership retention in such groups: Boland and Lindbloom observe that providing psychotherapy is a routine tactic for cults that serves as “a source of surveillance ... and the basis for threats of blackmail against an alienated member” (1992: 143).

Blackmail, specifically the threat of being exposed as corrupt, was a key component of keeping officers within the corrupt networks that existed in the QPF prior to the Fitzgerald Inquiry. Senior members of the Joke were not reluctant to fabricate incriminating material. In his memoir, former Detective Domenico Cacciola recalled occasions on which corrupt officer Jack Herbert would take bath towels from brothels during raids, and instruct other officers in the Joke to take them home and have sex on them with their wives; these towels would then be returned to Herbert, who would use them as evidence that prostitution was taking place on premises that refused to participate in his protection system (Cacciola and Robertson 2014). A regular strategy was to implicate non-corrupt officers in corruption slowly, without asking them to commit any specific corrupt acts at first. QPF officer Jim Slade told the Fitzgerald Inquiry that his superior at the Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, Alan Barnes, began paying him a sum of \$100 a month that allegedly came from Italian organized crime figures the Gerry and Tony Bellino (Condon 2015). Barnes did not request any action from Slade and, in fact, told Slade

that “a hundred a month is not bad for doing nothing” (Dickie 1988: 115). By offering Slade money from organized crime figures, and Slade accepting this money, Barnes had effectively compromised Slade to a point where he could use knowledge of Slade accepting illicit payments to extort him into committing further acts of corruption.

The case of Colin Dillon shows that this was not an isolated incident. Dillon testified to the Fitzgerald Inquiry that officer Harry Burgess, in some ways Herbert’s successor in organizing the Joke, had overtly approached him to participate in corruption in late 1982 (Dickie 1988: 93). In a statutory declaration supplied to Fitzgerald, Dillon said that after he refused this offer, Burgess placed a bottle of expensive whiskey in his locker and told him it was a “gift” from prostitution operator Anne-Marie Tilley (Dillon 1988). Again, Burgess attempted to compromise Dillon by implicating him in corruption against his will, with the likely goal of using this as collateral against him should he ever decide to take action by informing on Burgess and his collaborators in the Joke (Dillon 1988). As in a traditional cult, the cult of police corruption in the QPF sustained itself through fear. Officers did not act against the in-group because of a fear that their own impropriety would in turn be used against them. In this way, officers became trapped in the cult of corruption. As Kulik and Alarcon (2012) described, fear of reprisal is a key factor of any manipulative organization, and corruption in the QPF was no different. Just as it was with any other cult, threats and intimidation were essential extrinsic motivators for continued participation in corruption. Once an officer implicated themselves in misconduct, they were vulnerable to this type of coercive control which both prevented them from leaving the in-group and often drove them towards further, more serious manifestations of corruption.

## Conclusion

Organized police corruption is a subject that has attracted a limited degree of attention of the literature comparable to its prominence in the socio-cultural zeitgeist. As a result, there have been relatively few attempts to analyze how it develops in a practical setting. Theoretical analysis of police corruption thus far has tended to adopt a structural perspective, treating endemic misconduct as an expression of an anomic organizational culture (Tillman 2009). While the existence of a deviant organizational culture undeniably paves the way for corruption to take root, to assign responsibility for police corruption entirely to structural factors is to ignore the active role played by the officers who manage these illicit networks. By time its final report was released in mid-1989, the Fitzgerald Inquiry had revealed that corruption in the QPF was pervasive; rather than a case of “rotten apples” operating independently of each other, corruption in Queensland was well-organized and managed from within the highest echelons of the QPF hierarchy (Herbert 1988; Fitzgerald 1989). Fitzgerald was granted the authority to offer immunity from prosecution to officers who testified about the inner workings of this corrupt network and, because of this, a thorough outline emerged of how illicit protection rackets like the Joke operated. Testimony revealed that organizational culture was but one aspect of a more extensive system of recruitment and retention into the corrupt in-groups that existed in the QPF. Instead of occurring as the result of a passive social conditioning in the blue brotherhood individual officers were targeted for inclusion in corrupt activity, and were in turn enlisted by existing participants in a corrupt network using the tactics of seductive-recruitment outlined in Fournier and Monroy’s (1999) analysis of cult membership.

Currently there is a limited range of literature that applies cult theory to non-religiously or spiritually oriented groups. Despite this, the group dynamics of cults can just as easily be



applied to organized corruption in the blue brotherhood as to a conventional NRM (Barker 2010). As with cults, recruiting an officer into organized corruption requires that they suspend their pre-existing values, attitudes and beliefs in favor of those promoted by the in-group. This is an evolution that occurs organically over time, but is often triggered by pressures exerted by external actors seeking to shape the recruit's perspective (Kulik and Alarcon 2012). Seductive-recruiters use a range of strategies to facilitate the kind of cultural crisis that allows for anomic reconditioning to take place. Whether it is by isolating recruits from their emotional support systems or, alternatively, showcasing the way that deviant practices can be used to achieve the recruit's goals, the ultimate objective of the seductive-recruiter is to create a situation wherein the recruit becomes dependent on the deviant in-group (Duretete et al. 2008). Once this occurs, the seductive-recruiter's primary role shifts from promoting the benefits of membership to ensuring that the recruit does not undermine the solidarity of the in-group by leaving it. Retention of members is often predicated on intrinsic motivators like a fear of the social isolation that may occur after leaving the in-group, as well as extrinsic pressures such as the risk of being targeted by members of the in-group using blackmail in a manner that could be either coercive or retributive (Kulik and Alarcon 2012).

Little distinction can be made between the way that organized police corruption recruits and retains members, and the methods used by traditional cults. Both are heavily reliant on a doctrine of unquestioning loyalty to the in-group, which is facilitated by the recruit's enforced segregation existing social networks increasing their dependence on the in-group. Ultimately, a prolonged dependence of this nature results in the recruit associating their identity with that of the in-group. At this point, extricating the individual from the group becomes difficult: the individual perceives the welfare of the in-group as synonymous with their own, and risks to the in-group transform into a threat to their own survival. Corrupt QPF members used both intrinsic

manipulation and extrinsic threats to ensure the continued survival of their networks. Cults use the exact same methods, for the same purposes: to prevent members from leaving, and to expose the deviant practices that take place under the veil of secrecy cast over the in-group. While recruitment is important to expand the reach of the in-group, retaining members is more vital to its continuing existence. Organized police corruption might not fall under any traditional definition of a cult, but there are obvious similarities in the way each practices the recruitment and retention of members. At their core, cults and organized corruption are driven by the same central challenge: how to maintain the clandestine nature of the in-group while nevertheless seeking to recruit new members. Organized police corruption has adopted the same methods as a cult to accomplish this, utilizing a mix of structural conditions and coercive techniques to ensure that it is a significant risk to leave the in-group once a member is recruited.

Corruption is rarely the case of individual, rogue operators. Instead, it is usually the product of an anomic culture that facilitates deviant group behaviors. In cases where corruption becomes endemically entrenched in a police force, as it did in the QPF, the subcultural processes by which officers are recruited into corruption are not unlike those that can be observed in non-traditional religious movements, or cults. There is a utility in using a historical case study like that of the QPF to explore the formation of corrupt networks. The passage of time has allowed us to take a longitudinal perspective on corruption in the organization, and to better trace the connections between corrupt actors within the system. It gives us the kind of holistic view on police corruption that is not often available when analyzing contemporary corruption, where participants have a more clearly vested interest in maintaining the clandestine nature of the network. Analyzing the network of corruption that existed in the QPF has implications for contemporary anticorruption efforts in that it allows us to form a better idea of what corruption looks like in practice, and the methods of recruitment that contribute to extending the control

that corrupt networks are able to exert over the institution of policing. There are lessons to be learned for anticorruption practitioners here: by viewing the recruitment processes of corruption as being analogous to those used by cults, it is possible to identify and resolve the key areas of vulnerability that make recruits susceptible to being drawn into anomic subcultures of policing. If solutions can be developed to address these issues then practitioners will be better placed to intervene in the recruitment of police into entrenched, cult-like corruption networks.

## References

- Ashforth, Blake E. and Vikas, Anand. 2003. "The Normalization of Corruption in Organizations." *Research in Organizational Behavior* 25: 1-25. doi: 10.1016/s0191-3085(03)25001-2.
- Barker, Eileen. 2010. "The Cult as a Social Problem." Pp. 198-212 in *Religion and Social Problems*, edited by Titus Hjerm. New York City, NY: Routledge.
- Boland, Kim and Lindbloom, Gordon. 1992. "Psychotherapy Cults: An Ethical Analysis." *Cultic Studies Journal* 9(2): 137-162.
- Brereton, David and Ede, Andrew. 1996. "The Police Code of Silence in Queensland: The Impact of the Fitzgerald Inquiry Reforms." *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 8(2): 107-129. doi: 10.1080/10345329.1996.12036731.
- Bryett, Keith and Harrison, Arch. 1993. *Policing in the Community*. Sydney: Butterworths.
- Cacciola, Domenico and Robertson, Ben. 2014. *Who's Who In The Zoo?: A Story of Corruption, Crooks and Killers*. Brisbane: UQ Press.

- Campbell, Bruce. 1978. "A typology of cults." *Sociology of Religion* 39(3): 228-240. doi: 10.2307/3710443.
- Chamberlain, Daniel, Robyn Keast and Mark Lauchs. 2012. "Resilience of a corrupt police network: the first and second jokes in Queensland." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 57(2): 195-207. doi: 10.1007/s10611-011-9337-y.
- Condon, Matthew. 2013. *Three Crooked Kings*. Brisbane: UQ Press.
- Condon, Matthew. 2014. *Jacks and Jokers*. Brisbane: UQ Press.
- Condon, Matthew. 2015. *All Fall Down*. Brisbane: UQ Press.
- Cusack, Carole M. 2016. "Scientology and Sex: The Second Dynamic, Prenatal Engrams, and the Sea Org." *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 20(2): 5-33. doi: 10.1525/nr.2016.20.2.5.
- Dickie, Phil. 1988. *The Road to Fitzgerald*. Brisbane: UQ Press.
- Dillon, Colin. 1988. *Exhibit No 1912: Statutory Declaration of Dillion, Colin William Maxwell Dated 13 July 1988*. Queensland State Archives Item ID1278107, Commission of Inquiry – Exhibit.
- Duretete, Olivier, Marie Bronnec and Jean-Luc Venisse. 2008. "Idealization et dependence sectaire, reconstruction et lutte contre des processus passes d'alienation." *Le Divan Familial* (2): 169-184. doi: 10.3917/difa.021.0169.
- Eister, Allan W. 1972. "An Outline of a Structural Theory of Cults." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 11(4): 319-333. doi: 10.2307/1384673.

Fitzgerald, Gerald E. 1989. *Report of a commission of inquiry pursuant to orders in council.*

Brisbane: Commission of Inquiry into Possible Misconduct and Associated Police Misconduct.

Fournier, Anne and Michel Monroy. 1999. *La Derive Sectaire*. Paris: PUF.

Grigoriadis, Vanessa. 2018. "Inside Nxivm, the 'Sex Cult' that preached empowerment." *The New York Times*, May 30. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/30/magazine/sex-cult-empowerment-nxivm-keith-ranieri.html>).

Herbert, Jack R. 1988. *Jack Reginald Herbert Testimony to the Fitzgerald Inquiry, 31 August 1988*. Queensland State Archives Item ID2548405, Commission of Inquiry – legal advice.

Hough, Mike, Jonathan Jackson, Ben Bradford, Andy Myhill and Paul Quinton. 2010.

"Procedural Justice, Trust, and Institutional Legitimacy." *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 4(3): 203-210. doi: 10.1093/police/paq027.

Kleinig, John. 2001. "The blue wall of silence: an ethical analysis." *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 15(1): 1-23. doi: ijap20011515.

Kulik, Brian W. and Michelle Alarcon, M. 2012. "Strong Culture or Secular Cult? The Limits of a Strong Organizational Culture." Paper presented at the Conference of the Chinese American Scholars Association, January 2, Manila, Philippines, 2 January 2012.

Lenz, Susan A. and Robert H. Chaires. 2007. "The invention of Peel's principles: A study of policing 'textbook' history." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 35(1): 69-79. doi:

10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2006.11.016

Lucas, Geoffrey A. 1977. *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Enforcement of Criminal Law in Queensland*. Brisbane: Committee of Inquiry into the Enforcement of

Criminal Law in Queensland, Queensland State Archives ID2236744, Commission of Inquiry – reports.

Manning, Marni. 2014. “Reframing the lesson: Promoting the continued relevance of the Fitzgerald Inquiry to Policing in Queensland.” *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 9(2): 135-150. doi: 10.1080/18335330.2014.940818.

May, Tim. 1997. *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Merrington, Shannon E. 2017. “Dark Networks: Criminal Collaboration in Australian Police Forces.” PhD Thesis, Queensland University of Technology, QLD.

Merton, Robert K. 1957. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Monkkonen, Eric. 2002. *Crime, Justice, History*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press.

Newburn, Tim. 1999. “Understanding and Preventing Police Corruption: Lessons from the Literature.” *Police Research Series* (110).

Prenzler, Tim and Carol A. Ronken. 2001. “Police Integrity Testing in Australia.” *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 1(3): 319-342. doi: 10.1177/1466802501001003004.

Prenzler, Tim. 2009. *Police Corruption: Preventing Misconduct and Maintaining Integrity*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Punch, Maurice. 2009. *Police Corruption: Deviance, reform and accountability in policing*. Portland, OR: Willan Publishing.

Raab, Jorg and H. Brinton Milward. 2003. “Dark Networks as Problems.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 13(4): 413-439. doi: 10.1080/10967490600899747.

Skolnick, Jerome H. 2008. "Enduring issues of police culture and demographics." *Policing and Society* 18(1): 35-45. doi: 10.1080/10439460701718542.

Sponholz, Hai-Van K. 2005. "From the Inside Out: A Theoretical Study on Cults from a Depth Psychological Perspective." PhD Thesis, Pacifica Graduate Institute, CA.

Stark, Rodney and William S. Bainbridge. 1980. "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects." *American Journal of Sociology* 85(6): 1376-1395.

Tillman, Robert. 2009. "Making the rules and breaking the rules: the political origins of corporate corruption in the new economy." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 51: 73-86. doi: 10.1007/s10611-008-9150-4.

Wood, James. 1997. *Final report of the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service*. Sydney: Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service.